**SUMMARY OF ATLANTA PUBLIC MEETING**

**GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – October 30, 2007**
**KSU Center – Atlanta, Georgia**

The second Atlanta public meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at KSU Center in Atlanta, GA on October 30, 2007 beginning at 5PM. The meeting was an open house format, with display boards exhibited around the room and a PowerPoint Presentation highlighting the study overview and findings in greater detail. Seven members of the public were in attendance. Matthew Fowler, GDOT Planning, thanked the attendees for coming and turned the floor over to Andrew Smith, Consultant Project Manager for HNTB. A summary of the meeting presentation follows.

## Project Video/Introduction

Mr. Smith began by sharing the project video, including a 3-D animation of a truck lane, to help paint the picture of the expected freight increases in Georgia over the next 30 years. After the video, Mr. Smith began a presentation outlining the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the truck lanes study.

## Segment Level Analysis

Mr. Smith reviewed the study's Phase I Recommendations and explained the evaluation criteria applied to each of the segments selected for further study. These include Safety and Security, Congestion and Mobility, Benefits and Costs, Economic Development Initiatives, Environmental, and Constructability. He shared findings related to Safety and Security as well as PM peak volumes and speeds in the truck lanes in 2035. Mr. Smith explained that the increases (equating to travel time savings) in some corridors are significant, though truck lanes are not a silver bullet for congestion in all areas. He continued with benefit-cost ratios, constructability ratings, and the environmental assessment. Each of these factors was considered in the identification of corridors for further analysis as a part of four truck only lane systems developed for the Atlanta region. He explained that despite scoring lower than some of the other selected segments, I-675 was included in a portion of the system analysis because it has a lot of available right of way and therefore offers some cost savings relevant for consideration in the analysis.

## System Analysis

Mr. Smith presented the four system alternatives and described the logical termini and access points identified for each. Marc Cutler, Cambridge Systematics, then presented the system analysis results, including corridor volumes, speeds, and benefit-cost ratios. Mr. Cutler explained that the truck lanes attract demand from other arterials in the corridor and that the lanes accomplish a lot by doing this and keeping up speeds. He continued that there are two ways of looking at the B/C ratios. You can look at the system with highest benefit-cost ratio where you are getting the most for your money, or the system that costs most but also brings the most benefit. System 1 has the highest B/C ratio, but System 3 has the highest system benefit even though its costs are also the highest. Mr. Cutler noted that these numbers are also likely to go up once the economic benefit analysis is complete for each corridor. He turned the floor over to Mr. Smith who continued with the summary of environmental findings, and final system rankings. He then provided a general summary of observations regarding truck lanes and the preliminary study recommendations, which include the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-85 North, I-75 South, I-20 West, and I-285. The first phase includes the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-285 West, and I-75 South.

**Savannah Sub-Area**

Claudia Bilotto, HNTB provided an overview of the Savannah Sub-Area analysis conducted as part of the truck lanes effort. She explained that explosive growth projections at the Port of Savannah, as well as growth in warehouse/distribution space and increased commuter traffic have all contributed to the need for improvements that address truck-related traffic in the area. Ms. Bilotto outlined the importance of coordinating with other ongoing efforts in the area and provided an overview of the proposed port connector road project that is undergoing further consideration by GDOT and the Georgia Ports Authority. Additionally, operational improvements that address truck specific movements in the area will be included in the final recommendations of the study.

**Conclusions/Next Steps**

Mr. Smith then concluded the presentation with a summary of emerging issues related to truck lane opportunities. He explained that truck only lanes make sense, but they also must compete with many other improvements for limited funding.

Mr. Smith then opened the floor for questions.

**Questions and Comments**

**Q:** How do you determine the benefits?
**A:** Benefits are calculated based on changes in travel time, for example, speed. General assumptions are associated with time and the cost of operating a vehicle and applied for analysis.

**Q:** Can you go back and compare the ratio of cost vs. benefit in the past?
**A:** The ratios stay the same but costs are a lot higher than expected. That's why we compare them against one another.

**Q:** Do you assume no funding available from the state and federal government?
**A:** This is a critical issue. There could be state and federal funding cut but there could be other changes as well with different impacts. Public-Private Partnerships are emerging as a new option. There are some growing pains are associated with them. There are interested investors but it will be a matter of learning to leverage what is needed from each other.

**Comment:** The funding issue seems to land on the trucking industry if there isn't a gas tax increase. There hasn't been an increase in the state gas tax in 30 years or since 1993 at the federal level. I'd rather see the tax increase.

**Q:** There is a snowball effect of truck only toll lanes on the consumer. Has there been any study on this? The overall impact in this part of the country will be on everything we utilize and purchase.
**A:** A detailed economic analysis will be conducted. It is positive if the system is not tolled. It would have to be reevaluated if there is a pricing component.

**Q:** Will results differ with a toll component?
**A:** Yes – that has not been part of this study. These locations work if you build truck only lanes. This information will feed into another study – the managed lanes system plan – that will look at the addition of a pricing component.

**Comment:** Tolling vs. nothing is still an improvement. I support voluntary but not mandatory – there is still a question as to whether or not that would be legal.

**Q:** Would traffic divert to US 41 in Bartow County if I-75 has a mandatory truck only toll lane?
**A:** There would probably be an initial diversion factor to consider –this is often called a "ramp up" period as the users adjust to the changes in the system.

**Comment:** I don't feel that a toll lane provides a superior level of traffic service.
**Response:** This would be a little bit different – there would be managed demand by changing the price at various times of the day. For example, in California, passenger cars use the lanes by choice because it is a premium service.

**Q:** Do tolls ever end?
**A:** Yes – there is a bridge in South Georgia that had a toll removed a couple years ago. The toll on Georgia 400 is scheduled to come off in 2011 once the bonds are paid off.

**Comment:** I am close to retirement age and concerned about the economics and higher costs associate with paying to use roadways.
**Response:** In California, the vehicle mix has stayed essentially the same. They've found that people use the lanes when they need them – it is simply a choice and another option for the driver.

**Q:** Do you consider the HOV lanes in Atlanta successful?
**A:** Yes – in some places, too successful – they are congested.

**Q:** What about the outer perimeter?
**A:** It is now being called the east-west connector, but it is not officially on the books as a project.

**Comment:** I'd support a fuel tax increase instead of dropping this on the back of the trucking industry through tolls.